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Rankin Still Lists Private Law Office

By ALLAN WOLPER

Corporation Counsel J. Lee Rankin, who announced eight months ago that he would suspend his outside law practice, retains his law office listing in the Manhattan phone book.

And telephone inquiries to the law office now being rented from Rankin by New York County Conservative Party Chairman Harry Middendorf Jr. are referred to the Corporation Counsel's office in the Municipal Building.

The law office, at 38 W. 44th St., is also known as the New York Bar Building. Rankin's office listing in the phone book is directly under the number of his home.

The letter "b," for business, is next to the Corporation Counsel's name. Prior to the initial disclosure by The Post that Rankin engaged in an outside law practice, his office number had the word attorney next to it.

The new telephone book has entries dating to May 13, almost four months after The Post first revealed Rankin's law practice on Jan. 18. Rankin's office number is also listed in the new Manhattan street address directory, issued last month.

Rankin was unavailable for comment.

The American Code of Professional Responsibility and Canons of Judicial Ethics restricts attorneys from advertising, except on their office doors, building directories and in telephone books.

Rankin, after The Post disclosures last January, took his name off his office door and the building directory.

When he was first asked about his outside practice, the Corporation Counsel said that "I believe that the occasionaly rendering of legal service for a fee is not precluded by Section 1100 of the City Charter, since such services do not involve a substantial expenditure of time, and in my case, are minute in comparison to the full performance of my duties as Corporation Counsel."

The $41,000-a-year Corporation Counsel also said that he would not have accepted his city job if he was told he could not practice law. Rankin, however, sent a memo to lawyers in his department warning them against performing any outside legal work.

Section 39a-4.0 of the Administrative Code says "it shall be unlawful for the Corporation Counsel or any of his assistants to appear as an attorney or counsel in any action or litigation except in the discharge of his official duties . . .'"

The City Charter also forbids department heads from engaging in outside business interests or becoming involved in activities that may cause him to be in conflict of interest with his city work.

A special New York City Bar Assn. panel criticized Rankin last March for his "inappropriate" practice of law, but said the Corporation Counsel was not guilty of any conflict of interest.

Mayor Lindsay has said for several months that he would crack down on all city professionals who held outside jobs. A draft of the Lindsay executive order has been circulating around City Hall all summer.

Thai Deputy Warns Press

BANGKOK (AP)—Deputy Premier Gen. Praphas Charusathien warned Thai newspapers today to be fair in their reports or face possible severe consequences.